7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

796 offered during the year, for the purpose
794 either of decorating or repairing the
798 church or churches of the parish to
431 which they belong.
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It is also customary for every parish priest—on this special day, or on the day following—to present both the Bishop and the Governor of the Island with a
• [643] two lb. candle. It is to be observed, however, that the candle given to the Governor is only a blessed one when he happens to profess the Roman Catholic Religion.

178 This giving of candles to both the
796 Bishop and the Governor—a continua-
354 tion of a custom that prevailed in the
793 time of the Order of St. John of Jeru-
431 salem, when the Grand Master was annually presented with a blessed candle on this day—is meant as a token of respect to each of the highest Ecclesiastical and Civil dignitaries of the Island.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

big confits are thrown by some evil disposed person, and in such a manner, as to cause injury; in fact the Police authorities issue, every year, notifications warning persons against the throwing of hard substances. 541

On Monday the Governor of the Island gives a fancy dress ball at the Palace, which is always very numerously attended. Some of the costumes worn on this night are indeed magnificent, and the noble marble palace halls and corridors, once thronged by the knights of St. John of Jerusalem, present a truly picturesque appearance. A list of the persons present and the costumes worn is annually published in some of the local papers. 541 643.

The Carnival is supposed to have been originally instituted in imitation of the Sigillaria or festival days added 541 173 177

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

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516

MALTESE WOMEN IN FALDETTAS
[See pp. 28–29.]

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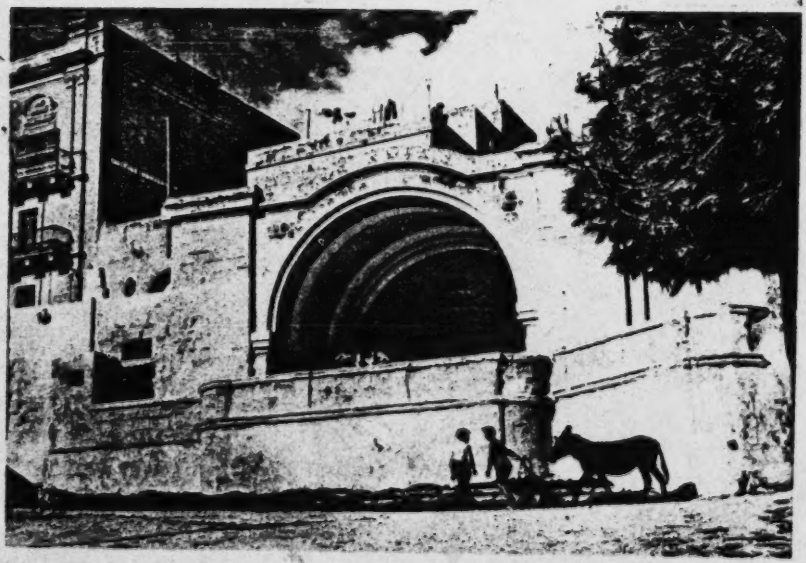

MNARJA RACES: THE GRAND MASTER'S (NOW THE GOVERNOR'S) BOX BELOW MDINA
[See pp. 27–28.]

[facing P. 41]
[pp. 41-48 not processed]

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

●643
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DEVELOPMENT OF THE GRAND MASTER'S HABIT

G.M. Vasconcellos

G.M. de Vilhena
(with Stoc and Pilier)

[facing p.104, (B)]

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

●643
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G.M. Hompesch

Emperor Paul of Russia as Grand Master

[facing P. 104, (C)]

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

361 There is nothing in the rest of the Old World quite like
363 the casals of Malta. Mostly built in the seventeenth and
342 eighteenth centuries, the older parts of them consist of narrow winding streets except for the square facing the parish church. The houses, of uniform height, present a front of uninterrupted masonry, the façades broken only by the boxed balconies typical of Malta. Here and there the sculptured porticoes and elaborately decorated windows and cornices of a nobleman's mansion interrupt the simplicity of the other houses, but the streets preserve that enchanting homogeneity of period which on a larger scale distinguishes Valetta from other cities of its size. They are vernacular architecture in the fullest sense of the term. The stonework bears the lovely patina of age; any patches of garden are out of sight. In the more densely inhabited parts of the island the growth of population may bring about a confluence of two or even three casals, as in the case of Attard, Lija and Balzan.

To wander about these great stone villages by full moon or on a night lit by the illuminations and fireworks of the annual *festa* is to experience a translation in time more realistic than any suggested by stage or screen.

643 Samuel Taylor Coleridge records that it was Sir Alexander Ball's "custom to visit each casal throughout the island once, if not twice, in the course of each summer: and during my residence there I had the honour of being his constant, and most often his only, companion in these rides; to which I owe some of the happiest and most instructive hours of my life." A mid-twentieth century Governor, Sir Charles Bonham-Carter, followed with success this practice of regular weekly visits to the casals.

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794 The Maltese are among the most devoted sons and daughters of the Roman Catholic Church. They are, men and women alike, assiduous at their public devotions; there

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

the Grand Master who was their founder or their patron, gay with the rich heraldry and colouring of the last phase of the age of chivalry. We have seen in Chapter XII that Grand Master Ferdinand von Hompesch, inglorious but Maltese-speaking and on excellent terms with the Maltese country-folk, gave one of his names and his special patronage to no fewer than three of the casals. Zabbar's subsidiary name was Città Hompesch, that of Siġġiewi Città Ferdinando, that of Zejtun Città Beland, the maiden name (Bylandt) of Hompesch's mother. Similarly, Curmi was known alternatively as Città Pinto, Zebbuġ as Città Rohan. In the cases of Senglea and Pawla the Grand Masters de la Sengle and de Paule were actually the founders.

It affords a pleasant and richly coloured glimpse into a romantic past, and happy evidence of the attachment of the Maltese to their unique historical traditions, to see the great square armorial flags of these Grand Masters in their proper tinctures waving on gala days over their casals.

July, August and September, the hottest months of the year, are Malta's *festa* season *par excellence*. At that period, and especially in August, there is an absolute orgy of what irreverent young officers are apt to call "festering," and the two islands resound from end to end with the detonations of petards and bombs. At night the parish church of whichever casal is celebrating its patronal feast is prettily illuminated, while elaborate set-pieces are displayed regardless of expense and other fireworks of a less stationary nature accomplish, or fail to accomplish, their destined trajectory. The amount spent annually by the population on fireworks and mere noise-making contrivances is positively staggering.

The first village *festa* I attended—I had arrived in Malta in the month of August—was in one of the smaller, more remote and more rustic casals. The church bells were clanging with no attempt at rhythm; rockets and Roman candles were going off in rapid succession in all directions; Catharine-wheels were rotating around one; the noise was

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6
Gozo

712 175 648 Among the more accessible survivals of the Order is the large and impressive Fort Chambray, which commands the island's principal port of Mġarr. This stronghold was built, as we have already seen, by Jacques de Chambray, one of the last of the great Admirals of the Order, when he was Governor[1] of Gozo in the middle of the eighteenth century so that the island should no longer be at the mercy of every raiding enemy. Not that Fort Chambray had ever to endure a siege at the hands of the Barbary pirates. Its value in that direction was mainly a prophylactic one. But it did serve a military purpose during the death-pangs of the Order in 1798, when the Gozitans under their Governor and three of the Knights shut themselves up within its walls, determined to hold out as long as they could against the surprised French, who had not expected any resistance.

344 341 Then there is the Banca Giuratale, a graceful, semicircular Baroque structure which Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena erected at the end of the main square of Victoria as the offices of the Jurats of Gozo. Another was until 1943—alas, that the past tense has to be used here—the charming manor outside Xewkija known as the Torri Gourgion. Although it had fallen somewhat from its high estate and had been reduced to the status of a farmhouse, this unspoiled piece of seventeenth-century rural architecture, embellished by a charming well, yet retained externally all the dignity of that lordly epoch. Its stone drop-boxes alternating with elaborate stone escutcheons, its tall staircase tower topped by a conspicuous dome, its suggestion of the fortified country-house —all these features made it the only structure of its kind in the Maltese Islands.

341 342 342 648 It is indeed lamentable that it should have had to be razed to the ground in 1943, not by enemy action but to make room for a temporary American aerodrome required in

[643] [1] The Governor of Gozo, known in Maltese as the Hakem, lived in the house in the Citadel which, as has been said, is now the Law Court and Public Registry.

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

CHAPTER XXI

After the Second World War

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795 TO THE STORM AND STRESS OF THE WAR YEARS SUCCEEDED other activities imposed by other pressures. Urgent was the need to repair the bombed areas; to stabilize an economy disturbed by war and post-war conditions; to speed up emigration from the world's most heavily overcrowded political unit; to take into consideration the ferment in men's minds which prolonged wars on a major scale have never yet failed to generate. The circumstance that the ferment took less unsettling forms in Malta than in some other parts of a war-distracted world may be ascribed to the steadying influence of the Church.

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652 Britain herself, though bowing beneath the weight of unprecedented taxation, did not fail to recognize the needs and deserts of her Maltese bulwark. "There will be general agreement," said the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the House of Commons in 1942, "that the outstanding gallantry shown by the people of Malta in the face of enemy attacks of unprecedented length and severity calls for some special recognition." A first free gift of ten million pounds, made there and then by the British Government for restoration of war damage and reconstruction, was followed by an additional grant of twenty millions for the same purposes. To these were added substantial and still continuing annual grants of several millions a year in aid of the local revenue.

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701 From 1813 to 1946, except for one four-year interval, the Governors of Malta had been distinguished serving soldiers—Field-Marshals and Generals on the Active List of the Army and Commanders-in-Chief, not only in name but in effect,

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

of the islands' military forces. The exception was the Right Honourable Richard More O'Ferrall, an Irish Roman Catholic Member of Parliament who had been a junior Minister in Lord Melbourne's Administration and was Governor of Malta from 1847 to 1851. O'Ferrall was sensitive, high-minded, well-intentioned and an indefatigable reformer; a Liberal by instinct, he gave Malta its first part-elected Legislative Council. But his very reforming zeal laid him open to bitter attacks and misrepresentation, which led to his premature resignation.

The experiment of placing a civilian and a politician in charge of Malta was held to have failed and was not repeated until 1946, when the Labour Government appointed a Socialist Member of Parliament in the person of Mr F. Douglas (later Lord Douglas of Barloch) as Malta's second civilian Governor. A new departure was made when Douglas was succeeded in 1949 by Sir Gerald Creasy, the first regular member of the Colonial Service to hold the appointment; yet another, when Creasy was succeeded in 1954 by Major-General Sir Robert Laycock. Although General Laycock is a distinguished soldier whose military career culminated in the post of Chief of Combined Operations during and after the Second World War, he had already retired from the Army before coming to Malta; his appointment was a civil one, not a revival of the military Governorship. So was that of Admiral Sir Guy Grantham, a former Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Station, who retired from the Navy immediately before succeeding Sir Robert Laycock in 1959.

2

Sections 2 to 4 of this chapter may be skipped by the reader not interested in Malta's constitutional vicissitudes between the restoration of self-government in 1947 and its temporary withdrawal in 1959. The book would, however,

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

668 of July 1955, to avoid unemployment, the representatives of the Maltese people, in Parliament assembled, declare themselves absolved from their pacts and obligations towards the British Government, and from those so far assumed towards the Allies of that Government—this position to obtain for so long as the British Government fails to guarantee that the number of persons employed by the said Government in Malta shall not decrease before there is "alternative employment" for those discharged.

On this inauspicious note ended the year 1957 despite the patient efforts of the Government in London and of Sir Robert Laycock and his advisers in Malta to bring the protracted and often vexatious negotiations to a happy issue. The latter's task thereafter was made no easier by a Circular issued in February 1958 to Heads of Departments and all other Malta Government employees forbidding them on pain of disciplinary action "to make any verbal or personal contacts on any official matter with any member of the other side of the Diarchy" without the personal permission of the Minister concerned. In April these words were extended to cover "any official matter *or otherwise*." Thereby was created the anomalous situation that the islands' officials subordinate to the Mintoff Administration had to boycott those of the Maltese Imperial Government not only officially but socially, even to the extent of declining the Governor's invitations to dinner. Be it added that the embargo was far from being universally observed, while Ministers continued to seek direct personal contacts with the Imperial side of the Diarchy whenever it suited them to do so.

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643 In 1608 one of the greatest and most innovating painters 175 of the Seicento, that Michaelangelo Amerighi who was 532 better known from his birthplace as Caravaggio, spent some 659 months of his short and disordered life in Malta, employed

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

by the splendid, vigorous and art-loving Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt. Notwithstanding the Grand Master's generous protection the 38-year-old artist soon made Malta too hot to hold him. He was put in prison, escaped and died in Italy within a year or so. But in the meantime Malta and the world had become the richer by two pictures which he painted for S. John's Conventual Church in Valetta, the great Beheading of S. John the Baptist and the smaller S. Jerome. In 1956 these pictures, which had never before left the walls for which they were painted except to be put in a place of safety during the Second World War, were sent to Italy in a British man-of-war for restoration and for display at the Exhibition of seventeenth-century art held in Rome during the winter of 1956–57. Of this Exhibition, indeed, the larger picture provided the central attraction.

At the close of the Exhibition the pictures were brought back to Malta, again in one of Her Majesty's ships, but to the general astonishment were forcibly impounded on arrival by the Maltese Government on Mr Mintoff's orders without previous notice and conveyed to the Museum despite vigorous protests from the ecclesiastical authorities. The Mintoff Government had clashed with the Church on other matters but there had been no inkling that its unpredictable leader had ever contemplated the transfer of these pictures to civil custody or the use of unilateral high-handed action to bring it about.

The state of tension with the Church created by this and other subjects of disagreement persisted for another year, that is to say until April 1958, by which time Mr Mintoff, now ready to break with the British Government, decided to clear the decks by making his peace with the Archbishop. As abruptly as he had seized the Caravaggios did he return them to S. John's, at the oddly chosen time of 1 A.M. on Sunday, the 20th April. On the following day statements were issued from the Archbishop's Palace and the Prime Minister's office declaring that good relations between the Government and the Church had been restored.